

BUMED Oral History Project



Dr. Lucy Ozarin

Subject: Dr. Lucy Ozarin (formerly Lieutenant Commander, Medical Corps, U.S. Navy Reserve)

Interviewer: André Baden Sobocinski

Date of interview: 4 September 2012

Location: National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, MD

Abstract:

Since 2004, Dr. Lucy Ozarin has volunteered at the History Division of the National Library of Medicine where she researches and writes biographies of notable American psychiatrists. Long before her service as a medical historian, Dr. Ozarin earned a living as a psychiatrist. Ozarin graduated from New York University and earned her MD from New York Medical College in 1937. She began a lifetime interest in psychiatry and neurology during her residency at Grasslands Hospital in Valhalla, NY (1939-1940), and at Gowanda State Hospital in Collins, NY (1940-1943). Certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology in Psychiatry (1945), Ozarin later earned an MPH from Harvard University School of Public Health (1961).

From 1943 to 1946, Ozarin served in the Navy where she earned the distinction of being one of the first women psychiatrists commissioned in the Navy (and only one of seven women Navy psychiatrists in World War II). During the war, Dr. Ozarin served at the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC), Bethesda, MD, Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune, and Hunter College (AKA, "USS *Hunter*") the primary training facility for over 95,000 Navy and Coast Guard women reservists (WAVES and SPARS, respectively).

At the time of this interview Dr. Ozarin was 98 years old.

Key Topics:

George Raines, Head of Psychiatry at National Naval Medical Center

Gowanda State Hospital, Collins, NY

Hunter College (AKA, "USS *Hunter*"), Bronx, NY

James Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy/Secretary of Defense

National Naval Medical Center (NNMC), Bethesda, MD

Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune, NC

U.S. Public Health Service

WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Services)

The date is 4 September 2012. Today I am sitting in the archives of the National Library of Medicine with Dr. Lucy Ozarin, a retired psychiatrist and active medical historian. Dr. Ozarin, it is a privilege to be with you this morning and I thank you for your time. Before we delve into your remarkable career I want to capture a bit of your early life. Where were you born?

I was born in Brooklyn in 1914. We left there when I was about seven and moved to a small town on Long Island and I was there throughout my childhood and education. I went to Lawrence High School in the next town, since we did not have a high school in my town. Then I went to New York University. My two older sisters and brother had gone there. Then I went to medical school at New York Medical College which was in New York [City] at the time; it has since moved to White Plains, or near there. I graduated from medical school in 1937. After that I interned at Harlem Hospital for two years. It was a two-year internship then. I got out of Harlem in 1939 while the Depression was still going on. I had no money. We weren't wealthy and I couldn't go into practice. The choices were to work in a hospital, either tuberculosis or a mental hospital. I thought psychiatry would be less "catching." I got a job as a resident in Westchester County. The Westchester County Hospital had a small psychiatric unit. I was there for about seven months and then my father had a stroke. I then left Westchester and got a job at the Gowanda State Hospital¹ 35 miles from Buffalo where my family was living. I stayed there for three years and saw what a state hospital was like.

What were your impressions of Gowanda?

It was rural. We drew patients from Western New York. State hospitals were not very good in 1940. After the war broke out and the men on the staff left, I was the only physician for a thousand patients. Which is impossible of course.

In 1943, when legislation for women physicians in the Navy was passed I decided I was going to go into the Navy.³ In [August] 1943 I did. I resigned even though the superintendent would not let me go. I got a temporary job as Assistant to the Superintendent at Metropolitan Hospital² in New York. I was there for about six months and then I was sworn in. I was amused because the Navy used the same form for the men and I'm referred to as a "him." [Dr. Ozarin shows interviewer commissioning document. Her title reads "Assistant Surgeon, Lieutenant Junior Grade."]

What did your family think when you told them you were joining the Navy?

It was alright. My brother joined in forty-two. He was an engineer who was sent to Harvard and MIT to learn sonar and radar. When I get it into my head to do something I usually did it. And my family was supportive.

Did you have any expectations for "Navy life?"

I didn't have any idea of what it would be like. But if you think back to what the atmosphere was like in 1942 and '43 the country was very "pro service" and I wanted to be part of it too.

What do you recall about the first days of the war?

Well, I listened to the radio, we had no television back in those days and the news was very discouraging. The whole atmosphere of the country was pro service and serving was the thing to do. And if I could contribute I would.

1. Gowanda State Hospital (later Gowanda Psychiatric Center) opened in 1898 as the "Gowanda State Homeopathic Hospital" in Collins, NY. At its peak the hospital treated over 4,000 psychiatric patients.

2. Metropolitan Hospital Center in New York, NY was founded at the Homeopathic Hospital in 1875. Between 1894 and 1955 the hospital was located on Blackwell's Island (later Roosevelt's Island) in the former New York City Asylum for the Insane. This was the site of Nellie Bly's seminal work, *Ten Days in a Mad-House*.

3. Public Law 38 dated April 1943 allowed women doctors to join the Army and Navy Reserves with the same pay and benefits of their male counterparts. By the end of the war there were 42 women serving as physicians in the Navy. As of 2012, there were 1,016 women serving in the U.S. Navy Medical Corps.

After being sworn in did you go through an indoctrination course?

I had no indoctrination. I put on a uniform one day and went to Washington. My father had died the same week I was sworn and it was a very emotional time. But as I say, I put on the uniform and reported to Bethesda. I didn't know how to salute.

I came to Bethesda and was assigned to psychiatry. The man in charge of psychiatry was CAPT [Forrest] Harrison.⁴ He was an older man and he was very warm-hearted. I stayed in Bethesda at that time from October 1943 until February 1944. The hospital was a beautiful structure and on the land around they began to build the temporary wards. There were lines of wards on both sides of the hospital. I don't think I was assigned to a ward at that time. I felt as though I was in a supportive environment. I rented a room in Bethesda. People had offered housing and the Navy had a list of where to go so I went and after four months I got orders to go to Camp Lejeune. I was there for about six weeks. It was very unsatisfying.

Camp Lejeune⁵ at that time had just been built and there were 33,000 men and 3,000 women. It was in the middle of no place. There was no transportation and no town around it. When I reported for duty I had no car. There were two women physicians on base and they had been assigned to the dependents clinic located outside the base. I don't think the commander of the hospital knew what to do with me. I got the feeling that he wasn't sympathetic to psychiatry. You have to realize that in the forties psychiatry was still something that meant state hospitals and "crazy people" to most of the population. I got assigned a room in the hospital and so I lived in that room until the commanding officer, [while] making inspections, found my personal things hanging in the bathroom because I had no access to a laundry. On that day, I got moved to the female officer barracks. This was a big room with a lot of women sleeping in it. Well, as I said I don't think the commanding officer knew what to do with me although there were two [other] psychiatrists assigned to the base at that time. I was told to examine laborers who had applied for jobs at the hospital. Here I was doing physical examinations. I already had four years of experience in psychiatry and this job did not seem appropriate. Especially when they were taking GPs⁶ with three months of training and making them psychiatrists. After a few weeks I wrote to one of the fellows I met at Bethesda and I'm sure he took my letter to CAPT Harrison because I got orders to go to the WAVES training station at Hunter College⁷ in New York. That was an interesting experience.

What were you doing at Hunter College?

Well, every two weeks we got 1,500 recruits. There were a number of doctors there including two women. One was named Wenner.⁸ When the WAVES came every two weeks we had to examine them. And there I was doing the psychiatric part of the examination. It was very good duty because the Navy had taken over all of the apartment houses around Hunter, put out the residents and that's where we lived. The officer's quarters was a very nice apartment house and I had an apartment that was very comfortable to live [in].

What were some of the common issues you were encountering with the WAVES?

At that time psychological examinations were limited, but we asked questions to determine their stability. Most were around twenty and they were very "up," but there were some who decided the regimentation was not for them. They wanted out. We worked very hard to get them through the physicals and then for a week or two we really didn't have anything to do until the next bunch of WAVES came through. It was pleasant duty. I was in New York City. One of the things I had very good recollection of is every Saturday night we had concerts with artists

4. CAPT Forrest Martin Harrison (7 Nov 1892 to 24 Dec 1957) served as Head of Psychiatry at NNMC until his retirement in 1945. He was the author of "Psychiatry in the Navy" published in the journal *War Medicine* February 1943.

5. Navy medical facilities have been located along the New River in North Carolina since the end of the Civil War. In 1941, construction began on a new Navy medical facility at Hadnot point on the east bank of the New River with the mission to support the Marine Corps Base at Camp Lejeune. Opening on 20 January 1942, this 600-bed hospital was called "Naval Hospital New River" until being redesignated as "Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune" on 1 November 1944. During World War II, this hospital reached a peak patient census of 1,287.

6. General Medical Practitioners

7. On 8 February 1943, Hunter College, Bronx, NY, was placed in service as the basic training center for Navy and Coast Guard women reservists (respectively, Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service or WAVES and SPARS or Semper Paratus.)

8. LT(JG) Pauline Kathryn Wenner V(G) (F) USNR, was commissioned in the Navy in 1943. She was one of six Navy physicians to graduate from the Women's Medical College, Philadelphia, PA (later part of Hahnemann/Drexel University).

from the Metropolitan Opera. I'm sure those artists weren't paid, but we had a wonderful concert every week. I like that because I like music.

The recruits stayed for six weeks⁹ and then they were sent out to various places. Secretarial school in Oklahoma, another school in San Francisco. When there was a draft of a hundred girls going they sent a doctor to go with them. I went on several of those trips. It took five or six days to go across country in one of those Navy transport trains because the freight came first. When there was a freight train coming we got "sidetracked."

You literally got "sidetracked."

On one trip we ran out of water and all the girls got diarrhea. They were fed twice a day on the trains. Here are all of these girls, but they couldn't prepare that much.

Did you experience any discrimination?

The one instance when I faced discrimination was when I was coming back from Georgia and stopped in Portsmouth, VA, where my brother was stationed. He met me and took me to a new USO club. When we walked in the door a civilian woman, who was apparently in charge, said that "We don't admit women." We were both in uniform—he was a "two-striper" and I was still a "jg." We had to leave. That's the only instance I only encountered.

It was good duty and I was comfortable [at Hunter College]. When I wasn't on duty I could go shop or do whatever in New York. That worked fine, but it didn't last. I was there until February 1945 because I was given orders to replace Frances Willoughby.⁸ When I came back we were getting a lot of admissions. And so I moved back to Bethesda and found a room. It was hard work. One month I had 77 admissions. By that time George Raines⁹ was in charge of psychiatry at Bethesda. He was very strict and don't think he knew how to deal with women psychiatrists. Every day he would have a staff meeting with all of his officers. One day Francis Braceland¹⁰ came in. He was the head of psychiatry at the Surgeon General's office. George went around the room and introduced every single physician on his staff until he came to me and then he skipped me completely. This amused me. He didn't pay much attention to me until one day when he said at a staff meeting that he had looked at the admissions and saw that I was handling more than any of the men. In time, I became a friend of George and we became fond of each other and he was supportive of me.

When I took over Frances Willoughby's job, she went to Philadelphia, the WAVES kept coming into Bethesda. There were many WAVES in Washington. We got a lot of admissions, especially from those from the Communications Bureau. One of the big problems was that they functioned around the clock with three shifts and it was difficult for some of the girls to adjust. They became anxious. They became irritable. They didn't feel good so they landed in Bethesda. I would talk to each of them. Some would go back to duty and overtly some wanted out. These were very young women and some could not adjust to the living quarters. When I was at Hunter College we did

9. Following basic training at USS *Hunter*, 83 percent of WAVES were sent to specialized training schools across the country. Many of these schools were on college campuses. An exception of this rule was the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery's training of women hospital corpsmen (AKA, CorpsWAVES). Following basic training, prospective women corpsmen were sent to one of seventeen Navy hospitals for specialized training. This changed in January 1944 with the advent of the "Women's Hospital Corps School" in Bethesda, MD, and training programs in Great Lakes, IL, and San Diego, CA.

10. LT Frances Willoughby, V(G) (F) USNR was born 1 July 1905 in Harrisburg, PA. In 1935, she earned a medical degree from the University of Arkansas and did a residency at Travis City State Hospital in Michigan. When World War II broke out she joined the Navy and was stationed at NNMCM where she treated female patients from the auxiliary branches of the armed service. At Bethesda, she helped to administer the first electric shock treatment ever given at a military hospital. When the Women's Armed Services Integration Act (1948) allowed for women to join the regular Navy, Willoughby became the first woman physician in the Navy Medical Corps as well as the only female doctor in the regular U.S. Armed Services. In 1950, Willoughby became the first female physician to reach the rank of Commander. She retired from the Navy as a Captain in 1964. She died in Pitman, NJ, in May 1984.

11. CAPT George Neely Raines, MC, USN (1908-1959) was a Navy psychiatrist who helped develop the nomenclature for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. From 1945 to 1950, Raines served as the Chief of Neuropsychiatry at NNMCM. His military career came to a close soon after the suicide of his patient, Secretary of Defense James Forrestal, from the NNMCM Tower in May 1949.

12. LCDR Francis Braceland, MC, USNR (1900-1985) world-renowned civilian psychiatrist appointed as Special Assistant to the Navy Surgeon General in 1943 and given the rank of "Lieutenant Commander." His testimony as "special witness" during the Nuremberg Trials would help spare the life of Rudolf Hess.

inspections every Saturday with white gloves looking for dust.

All of your patients at Bethesda were women?

Yes. I was assigned to the Women's Psychiatric and D Ward. In one row of the temporary structures they had male psychiatric patients and another ward was women. This is where I was medical officer. It was good duty, but I worked awfully hard with all of the admissions. I'm a good worker so I did it and achieved George's approval.

CAPT George Raines is a significant name in psychiatry. He helped develop the nomenclature in the first DSM catalog. What else can you tell me about him?

Well I mourned him when he died. He died in his fifties of cancer of the lungs. He was an inveterate smoker. He fit in very well with the Navy and it was too bad about Forrestal. One day I went to an American Psychiatric Association meeting and as I came in I saw George and he said he was leaving. I said, "The meeting hasn't begun yet. What's going on?" He said, "I have to go back to Bethesda. Forrestal died." George was the head of psychiatry when Forrestal went out of the window. Now, George wanted so much to be Surgeon General. Of course, that wrecked his ambition. He became head of psychiatry at Georgetown and converted, I believe, to Catholicism. He was from Mississippi. Women were to be placed on a pedestal and he had lots of respect for his wife. He was set in his ways, but he was a good boss to me. I was very fond of him.

Did you finish your service at Bethesda?

I stayed at Bethesda until 1946 when they were beginning to discharge the physicians. The Navy was good to me. I got time to study at St. Elizabeth's when I was in service. I took my boards in 1945 and passed them for the first time. The boards for psychiatry and neurology was established in 1934.¹³ The specialties had been founded before then so the psychiatrists joined the party. [Adolph] Meyer¹⁴ at Johns Hopkins had advocated for it. My colleagues at Bethesda were talking about the Boards; I didn't know anything about them at the time. I studied and went to St. Elizabeths. There was a lady there who had a wonderful collection of specimens because at the boards you had to look at tissues and identify them. I took my boards at Psychiatric Institute in New York.¹⁵ It was a terrible ordeal and I vowed I would never again take an examination.

I was getting out of service (active duty) and had no job. I applied for a fellowship in Child Psychiatry. I left Bethesda about June and went home and stayed with my family. After a month or two, I didn't hear anything and I still didn't have a job. One day I ran into Mike Spotswood, who was a fellow [Navy] orientee with me [at Bethesda]. A nice guy. He said "Come to the Veterans Administration (VA). They pay 25 cents more if you're board certified," which I was. I went down to the VA's central office and met Harvey Tompkins.¹⁶ He was head of Hospital Psychiatry then. His boss was Dan Blain¹⁷ who was head of psychology and neurology with the VA. I went into this huge room with six people in it, including three secretaries. I talked to Harvey for about ten minutes then he took me into his boss, Dan Blain and I got hired by the VA, just like that.

Harvey hired me as Assistant Chief of Hospital Psychiatry. Within a year, Dan Blain went on to become the head of psychiatry in California and Harvey took his place. I then went on to become Chief of Hospital Psychiatry for the VA. Now I had absolutely no authority. It was a staff job. I don't know if I had a job description, but they let me do what I wanted. I used to read every report that came across my desk. One day I realized that one thing I was seeing that half the people at VA mental hospitals had been there between five to ten years. This should not have surprised me because at the state hospitals most of the mental patients had been there for years. But I went to Harvey and asked him "Why is this happening?" And he said, "Go and find out." So I began to visit the hospitals.

13. The American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology was established in 1934. It is one of two organizations that certify physicians who have completed residencies in psychiatry or neurology.

14. Dr. Adolph Meyer (1866-1950) was a Swiss-born psychiatrist who served as a professor of psychiatry at John Hopkins (1910-1941).

15. New York State Psychiatric Institute located in Manhattan was founded in 1895.

16. Dr. Harvey Tompkins (1906-1983) was the head of psychiatry for the Veterans Administration before becoming the president of the American Psychiatric Association (1966-67).

17. Dr. Daniel Blain served as President of the American Psychiatric Association (1965-65). In 1950, he established the *Journal of Psychiatric Services*.

I went to one hospital and saw all of the chronic patients. At the Gawanda, I was assigned, as I told you, 1,000 patients and they were all chronic. On the women's side we had 500 patients. I had to do a physical on every single one when I was there. Most of them were schizophrenic. The [state] mental hospitals back then were "hell holes."

Here was I, a little psychiatrist meeting with the superintendent of this mental hospital. At that time the VA was a growing concern with all the thousands of veterans being admitted. Yet the hospital had all this backlog of chronic patients. I think there were more psychiatric casualties at the VA than any other diagnoses. The VA had 41 mental hospitals all across the country. And in time I visited every one.

I had a very satisfactory stay in the VA. But I owe it all to the Navy and Michael Spotswood. Not long after Harvey left I decided to pursue a career in Public Health, which was very important in those days. Now the Public Health Service is one of the driving forces in psychiatry. I went to Public Health in 1957.¹⁸ I had to give up my Navy commission in 1957. I retired in 1983. I had a good career in Public Health. I was first assigned to the regional office in Kansas City. I stayed there for three years until they sent me to Harvard to get an MPH. They paid my salary and paid my tuition. I came back to Washington to the Public Health Division of Psychiatry and stayed there until I retired.

In the Navy, I met all of the big names. Right now, one of my assignments here is to write brief biographies of psychiatrists for Wikipedia. This has been going on for two years and I have written 53. I hope they will make it to Wikipedia eventually. Now I have just done a draft on Larry Kolb.¹⁹ You ever hear his name?

I'm afraid not.

He was in the Navy and had the ward next to mine. I must tell you about one incident. One Sunday morning I was on my way to do rounds at Bethesda and ran into the Chief of Medicine at the Naval Hospital. He was a big man from St. Louis. When I saluted him he tipped his cap to me. It was so funny.

I had one distressing experience in the Navy. This was at Bethesda. We had admitted to my ward a civilian woman. I came to work one day and saw we admitted this young woman. We didn't normally admit civilians to the naval hospital. I found out that she was the daughter of an admiral and she had been admitted as an emergency. One Sunday afternoon I was in my office and in comes a vice admiral. I forgotten if I was a "jg" or a "two-striper." This man was the father of this girl. He was terribly excited and tense. To have a daughter who became psychotic was terrible for him. He stomped around my office saying the "Communists were out to get him." And worse still, "it was the Jews." Of course, I'm Jewish. I kept silent and let him vent. He did for about fifteen to twenty minutes then he went to see his daughter and I went up to George Raines and told him what happened. The girl didn't stay with us very long. She was transferred to Sheppard,²⁰ Pratt²¹ or someplace. That situation stayed in my head all of these years. I knew we were just keeping her and I knew I wasn't responsible in anyway.

[In another instance.] One day a young sailor came to see me. This was in Ward 137. That was the WAVES NP Ward. He came because his girlfriend had been admitted to my ward. She was one who didn't want to be in the Navy. But she was upset because she found herself engaged to two sailors. I recognized this young sailor was very tense and upset. I was upset because of seeing him. I got up and went next door to talk to Larry, but he didn't help me much. And I let this sailor go. Well, a week or two or three later his father came to see me. This boy had drowned himself. And it's one of my regrets of my life. I wish I could have done something for him. He wasn't anyway connected to a medical situation, but I regret it.

That's terrible.

I'll tell you another incident I remember. Ward 137 was over the patients' laundry. In summer, when the dryers were on it got incredibly hot. Well, we got inspection every week and one day the commanding officer came

18. Dr. Ozarin stayed in the Navy Reserves until 1957 when she was commissioned in the Public Health Service.

19. During World War II, Dr. Lawrence Kolb (1911-2006) worked at Naval Hospital Portsmouth, NH, where he specialized in combat stress disorders. After the war, Kolb worked at the National Institute of Mental Health in Bethesda, MD, and the Mayo Clinic.

20. Sheppard Air Force Base, Wichita Falls, TX

21. Pratt Army Air Force Base in Pratt, KS, closed in 1946

to the ward. He was a very nice fella. I went around with him and said put your hand on the floor. The laundry got shot down the next day. That was a wonderful example of taking action. But it took a commanding officer to do something. We didn't have air conditioning in those days, and it was hot.

Overall you have fond memories of your service in the Navy.

The Navy was an instructive place for me because I rubbed shoulders with the greats in psychiatry. That was my real introduction to the field. I had a very good experience in the Navy, except for Camp Lejeune.

What advice would you give someone entering the Navy?

Take advantage of any offer or opportunity that you can get. I mean that because you meet some wonderful people. As I say it changed my life. If it wasn't for the Navy I would have spent my entire career at the state hospital. The Navy gave me opportunities.

Dr. Ozarin, this has been a delight. Thank you again for spending time with us today.

My pleasure.

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